

Soviet Union. And we are not—we do not look at each other through the sights of our weapons systems. And in this, I fully agree with my colleague, President Bush.

As for the future, as I already mentioned, we are now discussing a possibility of raising our relations to an entirely new level that would involve a very private and very, shall we say, sensitive dialog on all issues related to international security, including, of course, the missile defense issue.

If this is to happen, I would like to draw your attention to this: The relations between our two countries would be raised to an entirely new level. Gradually, our relations would become those of a strategic partnership nature. It would mean raising the level of our—and improving the level of our interaction in the area of international security, thus leading to improved political interaction and cooperation with a final effect being, of course, evident in our economic relations and situation.

Well, basically, we may state that the deck has been dealt, and we are here to play. And I would very much hope that we are playing one and the same game.

President Bush. I think we'll see each other in Australia. Secondly, I know we'll be talking on the phone because there's a lot of issues that we are working together on, which is part of the legacy of this relationship, and that is that it's in the U.S. interest to keep close relations with Russia, and that when it comes to confronting real threats, such as nuclear proliferation or the threat of radicalism and extremism, Russia is a good, solid partner.

Russia has made some amazing progress in a very quick period of time. One of the first conversations I had with Vladimir Putin was about Soviet-era debt. This is a country with no debt. It's got solid reserves. It's a significant international player. It's got a growing middle class. For those old Russian hands who remember what it was like, there's an amazing transformation taking place. Is it perfect from the eyes of Americans? Not necessarily. Is the change real? Absolutely. And it's in our interests—in the U.S. interests to have good, solid relations with Russia. And that's what Vladimir and I have worked hard to achieve.

And we're going to go continue those relations with a lunch. So thanks for coming.

President Putin. Of course we will continue our relations in the future. Today's fishing party demonstrated that we have a very similar—we share the same passion—that is, passion.

Vice President Richard B. Cheney

Q. Is Cheney a member of the executive branch?

President Bush. I didn't hear you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:28 p.m. at Walker's Point. President Putin referred to European Union Foreign Minister Javier Solana Madriaga; Cable News Network talk show host Larry King; and former Central Intelligence Agency Director George J. Tenet. President Putin and some reporters spoke in Russian, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Statement on Granting Executive Clemency to I. Lewis Libby

July 2, 2007

The United States Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit today rejected Lewis Libby's request to remain free on bail while pursuing his appeals for the serious convictions of perjury and obstruction of justice. As a result, Mr. Libby will be required to turn himself over to the Bureau of Prisons to begin serving his prison sentence.

I have said throughout this process that it would not be appropriate to comment or intervene in this case until Mr. Libby's appeals have been exhausted. But with the denial of bail being upheld and incarceration imminent, I believe it is now important to react to that decision.

From the very beginning of the investigation into the leaking of Valerie Plame's name, I made it clear to the White House staff and anyone serving in my administration that I expected full cooperation with the Justice Department. Dozens of White House staff and administration officials dutifully cooperated.

After the investigation was underway, the Justice Department appointed United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois

Patrick Fitzgerald as a special counsel in charge of the case. Mr. Fitzgerald is a highly qualified, professional prosecutor who carried out his responsibilities as charged.

This case has generated significant commentary and debate. Critics of the investigation have argued that a special counsel should not have been appointed, nor should the investigation have been pursued after the Justice Department learned who leaked Ms. Plame's name to columnist Robert Novak. Furthermore, the critics point out that neither Mr. Libby nor anyone else has been charged with violating the Intelligence Identities Protection Act or the Espionage Act, which were the original subjects of the investigation. Finally, critics say the punishment does not fit the crime: Mr. Libby was a first-time offender with years of exceptional public service and was handed a harsh sentence based in part on allegations never presented to the jury.

Others point out that a jury of citizens weighed all the evidence and listened to all the testimony and found Mr. Libby guilty of perjury and obstructing justice. They argue, correctly, that our entire system of justice relies on people telling the truth. And if a person does not tell the truth, particularly if he serves in government and holds the public trust, he must be held accountable. They say that had Mr. Libby only told the truth, he would have never been indicted in the first place.

Both critics and defenders of this investigation have made important points. I have made my own evaluation. In preparing for the decision I am announcing today, I have carefully weighed these arguments and the circumstances surrounding this case.

Mr. Libby was sentenced to 30 months of prison, 2 years of probation, and a \$250,000 fine. In making the sentencing decision, the district court rejected the advice of the probation office, which recommended a lesser sentence, and the consideration of factors that could have led to a sentence of home confinement or probation.

I respect the jury's verdict. But I have concluded that the prison sentence given to Mr. Libby is excessive. Therefore, I am commuting the portion of Mr. Libby's sentence

that required him to spend 30 months in prison.

My decision to commute his prison sentence leaves in place a harsh punishment for Mr. Libby. The reputation he gained through his years of public service and professional work in the legal community is forever damaged. His wife and young children have also suffered immensely. He will remain on probation. The significant fines imposed by the judge will remain in effect. The consequences of his felony conviction on his former life as a lawyer, public servant, and private citizen will be long-lasting.

The Constitution gives the President the power of clemency to be used when he deems it to be warranted. It is my judgment that a commutation of the prison term in Mr. Libby's case is an appropriate exercise of this power.

Proclamation 8159—Grant of Executive Clemency

July 2, 2007

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Whereas Lewis Libby was convicted in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia in the case *United States v. Libby*, Crim. No. 05–394 (RBW), for which a sentence of 30 months' imprisonment, 2 years' supervised release, a fine of \$250,000, and a special assessment of \$400 was imposed on June 22, 2007;

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, pursuant to my powers under Article II, Section 2, of the Constitution, do hereby commute the prison terms imposed by the sentence upon the said Lewis Libby to expire immediately, leaving intact and in effect the two-year term of supervised release, with all its conditions, and all other components of the sentence.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this second day of July, in the year of our Lord two thousand and seven, and